

# Crack Propagation and Microwave Healing of Ferrite-filled Asphalt Mixes Based on Image Correlation Observations

Xingyi Zhu<sup>1</sup>, Yinhong Fan<sup>1</sup>, Ying Yu<sup>2, 4\*</sup>, Francisco A. Gilabert<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Key Laboratory of Road and Traffic Engineering of Ministry of Education, Tongji University, Shanghai 200092, P. R. China

<sup>2</sup>Department of Civil Engineering, Shantou University, Shantou 515063, P. R. China

<sup>3</sup>Ghent University, Mechanics of Materials and Structures, Tech Lane Ghent Science Park – Campus A, Technologiepark-Zwijnaarde 46, Zwijnaarde, 9052 Ghent, Belgium

<sup>4</sup>Jiangsu Province Key Laboratory of Structure Engineering, Suzhou 215011, China

## Abstract

One of the most important features of asphalt mixes is their ability to undergo self-healing after certain time intervals. Increasing the temperature can accelerate the healing process. In this study, the heating process will be triggered by using microwave technology when ferrite powders is added in asphalt mixes. Fracture tests were performed on open-graded friction course (OGFC) asphalt and ferrite-filled asphalt mixes under three-point bending with different heating and resting time periods. To examine the improvements in the microwave healing and fracture response of ferrite-filled asphalt mixes, the fracture process zone (FPZ) was characterized and quantified through digital image correlation. The FPZ lengths of the specimen with and without ferrite powder were compared. The asphalt specimens including ferrite powders are proved to have a relative longer FPZ length providing an improved cohesive response and a higher cracking resistance.

## Key words:

microwave healing; crack propagation; ferrite powders; digital image correlation; fracture process zone

## 1. Introduction

Open-graded porous asphalt mixes have been increasingly used as surfacing pavement materials in order to efficiently improve the safety characteristics of road networks and to reduce noise [1]. However, due to the open nature of these materials, the asphalt binder, which is the binding system between the aggregate particles, oxidizes and ages rapidly, and thus material stiffening and embrittlement occur [2]. Raveling, which refers to the loss of particles from the top pavement surface, is the main drawback of an in-service porous asphalt [3]. Therefore, various maintenance technologies have been developed the previous years in order to prevent the aging of porous asphalt pavements. One technology involves triggering the self-healing ability of asphaltic materials through electromagnetic induction or microwave irradiation[4]. Particularly, self-healing is the ability of a material to repair damage caused by external force over time. Several studies of the self-healing mechanisms of asphalt mixes have been conducted. Bazin and Saunier [5] studied the healing properties of asphalt mixes. They found that the fatigued or even broken asphalt mixes can be healed to some degree after certain resting time periods and thus the concept of self-healing was

\* Corresponding author. E-mail: yuying@stu.edu.cn

proposed. Little and Bhasin [6] stated that self-healing occurs due to the diffusion of the molecules across the two sides of a crack. This phenomenon creates connection points which may lead to the partial reconstruction of the material's continuity.

The factors influencing the self-healing behavior have attracted considerable interest. Temperature is considered as the main factor affecting self-healing behavior. Grant [7] found that the healing rate can be increased at high temperature by shortening the heating time periods. Daniel and Kim [8] found that the amount of stiffness gain seemed to increase when specimens were subjected to a higher temperature during the resting periods. Certain types of asphalt behaves similarly to a Newtonian fluids between 30 and 70 °C [9]. These types of asphalt start to flow and heal the microcracks.

The temperature-dependent characteristics of healing offers a potential way to heal the asphalt mixes through asphalt flow and diffusion at a high temperature. To accomplish this, various technologies have been proposed to trigger the self-healing ability of asphaltic materials. Chiostri et al. [10] established the microwave heating model and found that microwaves can cause a rapid heating through radiant heat transfer. Therefore, microwave heating is therefore used to trigger the healing of asphalt mixes. This is called the microwave healing. Microwave heating can also provide an uniform heating without overheating the surface of the asphalt mixes [11]. It also allows deep heating without a large difference in the temperature of the surface and the bottom of the asphalt pavements [12]. Microwave heating has advantages over conventional heating [13] and can be applied in the field of pavement recycling [14] and asphalt pavement production [15]. However, microwave heating also has certain drawbacks.

The efficiency of asphalt absorbing microwave energy depends on its dielectric properties[12]. Asphalt has poor dielectric properties at microwave frequencies [16]. Qiu [17] stated that only some magnetite-bearing aggregates and mineral powders in asphalt concrete can absorb electromagnetic waves. Therefore, the heating efficiency of asphalt concrete should be enhanced. However, the microcracks in asphalt cannot heal efficiently because the asphalt mastic lacks the ability to absorb the microwaves [18, 19]. Apostolidis et al. [20] found that adding iron powders and steel fibers to asphalt mortar could increase its electrical conductivity and magnetic permeability of asphalt thus enhancing the capacity of the material to absorb electromagnetic waves. Graphite, carbonyl iron powders and carbon nanotubes are added to asphalt to improve its microwave absorbing characteristics [16, 21]. Wu et al. [22], Liu et al. [23], and Garcia et al.[24, 25] have concluded that the optimum steel wool (a type of inductive fibers) content in asphalt mixes is between 1.5% and 5% by weight of the asphalt mixes, depending on the type of asphalt mixes and the addition of other additives, such as graphite.

Various additives significantly enhance the healing efficiency of asphalt mixes. Wang et al. [26] found that the fatigue resistance and healing capacity of the asphalt concrete containing steel fiber and graphite were higher than those of neat asphalt concrete after microwave healing. Zhu et al. [27] found that when asphalt mixes were filled with 80% ferrite powders (volume fraction of mineral powders), the fatigue life extension rate can reached 1.33 after microwave heating and 3 hours of resting time periods. According to the reference by Zhu et al.[27], under microwave irradiation, ferrite powders in asphalt mastic can absorb the microwave and convert them into heat, which increases the temperature and ultimately the microwave healing efficiency of the asphalt mastic.

Asphalt mixes are heterogeneous materials, and their fracture behavior is complicated.

Obtaining the fracture parameters is difficult due to the difficulties in observing the entire fracture process directly. To obtain more experimental data, a full-field measurement method is required. In the last decade, the use of full-field non-contact optical measurement techniques has become increasingly popular for investigating fracture behavior [28]. Several experimental techniques such as acoustic emission [29-31], scanning electron microscopy (SEM) [32, 33] and laser-speckle interferometry [34, 35] have been used to investigate the fracture process zone (FPZ). A relatively new technique called digital image correlation (DIC) is becoming popular for investigating the healing behavior of asphalt mixes. Kim and Wen[36] were the first to use DIC to measure displacements and strains in asphalt mixes. DIC is an optical technique used to visualize and quantify the relative displacements of a set of points (speckle pattern) marked on a specimen's surface. The displacements of the marked points can be tracked by comparing the digital images of a specimen's surface between successive steps during the loading process, the displacements of painted points can be tracked. This field of displacement allows the direct derivation of the strain field. DIC is especially suitable for detecting, locating and tracking cracks, which are seeing like a discontinuity (or jumps) in the displacement field. In rock-concrete interfaces, DIC has been successfully applied to three-point bending (TPB) and four-point shearing (FPS) setups [37] in rock-concrete interfaces to understand the crack propagation and to assess the size of the FPZ. Due to its high responsiveness, high accuracy and non-destructive nature of the DIC technique, it is also used to investigate the cracking behavior of the hot mix asphalt (HMA), including the fracture and fatigue behavior of asphalt mixes[38]

The aim of this study was to investigate the microwave healing behaviors of traditional open-graded friction course (OGFC) and ferrite-filled asphalt mixes. Four types of asphalt mixes were considered: asphalt mixes with and without ferrite powders in their first fracture process and asphalt mixes with and without ferrite powders after recovery. Two different tests were conducted on the mixes: the displacement-controlled mode semi-circular bending (SCB) test and stress-controlled mode SCB test. The damage process of specimens was investigated and the fracture event was recorded with cameras to enable DIC measurements. The microwave healing behavior was characterized by quantifying and comparing their fracture properties of the four asphalt mixes according to DIC observations.

## 2. Material preparation

The mix proportion of the asphalt mixes was designed according to the OGFC-13 gradation presented in Table 1. The asphalt-aggregate ratio was 4.7%. A total of 20 specimens of two types of OGFC mixtures (with and without ferrite powders) were prepared for the conducted tests. The aggregate used in the test was limestone. The properties of OGFC-13 asphalt mixes are presented in Table 2.

Table 1 Gradation of OGFC-13 asphalt mixes.

Sieve size/mm	13.2	9.5	4.75	2.36	1.18	0.6	0.3	0.15	0.075
Passing rate/%	93.8	75.6	27.7	19.3	16.2	12.2	9.2	7.5	6.0

Table 2 Marshall test results of OGFC-13 asphalt mixes.

Properties	Bulk specific gravity	VV/%	VMA/%	VFA/%	Marshall stability /KN	Flow value/mm
Value	2.126	19.85	29.51	32.74	5.12	3.084

The ferrite powder used in asphalt mixes was Mn-Zn ferrite powder of high initial permeability and residual magnetization. This ferrite powder can absorb microwaves and transform them into heat energy [39]. In this study, the equivalent volume replacement method was adopted. In this method, a certain volume of mineral fillers in a mixture is replaced by the same volume of ferrite powders. The mass of mineral fillers is converted into a particular mass of ferrite powders according to the following equation:

$$m_{fe} = \frac{m_k \times \rho_{fe}}{\rho_k} \quad (1)$$

where  $m_{fe}$  is the mass of ferrite powders,  $m_k$  is the mass of mineral fillers,  $\rho_{fe}$  is the apparent density of ferrite powders ( $4.464 \text{ g}\cdot\text{cm}^{-3}$ ) and  $\rho_k$  is the apparent density of mineral fillers ( $2.740 \text{ g}\cdot\text{cm}^{-3}$ ).

Zhu et al. [40] investigated the pavement performance, mechanical properties, and heating efficiency of asphalt mixes with different ferrite concentrations. Mixtures with 5% ferrite powders exhibited the best performance. According to Eq. (1), the mass ratio of ferrite powders to mineral fillers in this study was 5.365:1.

### 3. Experimental methods

The approach proposed in this paper for analyzing the healing process of porous asphalt mixes comprises four basic steps: (i) create a controlled amount of damage in the specimens through two types of mechanical testing, (ii) heat the specimens through microwave irradiation, (iii) repeat the mechanical testing conducted in step (i) to check whether the damage has healed, and (iv) assess the differences between mixtures with and without ferrite by using DIC.

#### 3.1 SCB test

The SCB test was originally developed to measure the cracking susceptibility of asphalt [41]. In this test, a diametrically halved cylinder is loaded in a TPB setup. A notch (starter crack) is sawn to promote the initiation and crack propagation. The SCB setup offers some advantages. The geometry of the specimen is straightforward, and the specimen is easy to prepare. Moreover, the specimen has a sufficiently large area for DIC technology. The specimen geometry and load configuration enable the achievement of controlled crack growth, which is easy to monitor. Due to the aforementioned factors, the SCB setup is suitable for testing asphalt mixes.

A universal testing machine (Servo-Hydraulic Universal Testing Machine UTM, 30 kN cap, 79-PV70B02) equipped with a temperature control chamber was used for the SCB test. Fatigue testing is generally recommended at four temperatures:  $10^\circ\text{C}$ ,  $15^\circ\text{C}$ ,  $20^\circ\text{C}$ , and  $25^\circ\text{C}$ . Most of the expected in situ damage occurs within the aforementioned temperatures [42]. To avoid an excessive number of variables, the SCB test was conducted at  $15^\circ\text{C}$ , which is considered as an intermediate temperature. As displayed in Fig. 1, the setup for the SCB test comprised two supporting rollers at the bottom edge and a loading roller at the middle point of the top edge. The distance between supporters was 80 mm, which was four to five times the diameter.

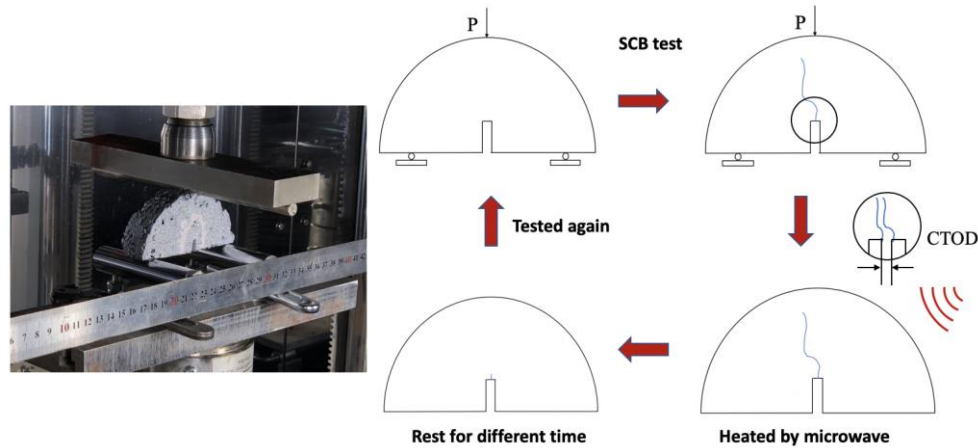


Fig. 1. Process of the SCB test.

### 3.2 Specimen preparation

The Superpave gyratory compactor was used to compact cylinder-shaped specimens of HMA. These cylinders had a diameter of 100 mm and height of 50 mm. Two shorter cylinders were obtained from each cylinder by cutting it perpendicular to the axial direction. Next, each slice was cut perpendicular to its thickness into two identical semicircular halves and an edge notch was created in the middle of the semicircular base. **Error! Reference source not found.** displays the final geometry of the SCB specimens. The final dimensions were as follows: diameter = 100 mm, depth = 25 mm, notch length = 10 mm, and notch width = 4 mm.

### 3.3 Loading conditions

Two loading modes were applied: the displacement- and stress-controlled modes. The displacement-controlled-mode SCB test was used to determine the fracture toughness of the asphalt mixes [43]. The aforementioned mode allows the determination load at which the specimen fails. The stress-controlled mode, in which a test specimen is loaded with a cyclic sine signal, allows the experimental evaluation of the fatigue life extension of asphalt mixes.

#### 3.3.1 Displacement-controlled-mode SCB test

The displacement-controlled-mode SCB test was conducted according to the ASTM D8044-16 standard. A constant displacement rate of 5 mm/min was applied to the specimen until failure. As depicted in Fig. 2, the specimen remained unchanged until it split suddenly into two pieces due to a well-developed pre-cracked area along its middle. The two pieces were manually joined without applying pressure to guarantee minimum connection between both crack faces. Next, the specimen was heated in a microwave and rested at 15°C. Finally, the specimen was tested again at 15°C to obtain the corresponding crack tip opening displacement (CTOD). Table 3 presents the nomenclature of the specimens tested under different conditions and periods of heating. A traditional OGFC asphalt mix (s1) and ferrite-filled asphalt mix (s2) were selected for testing.

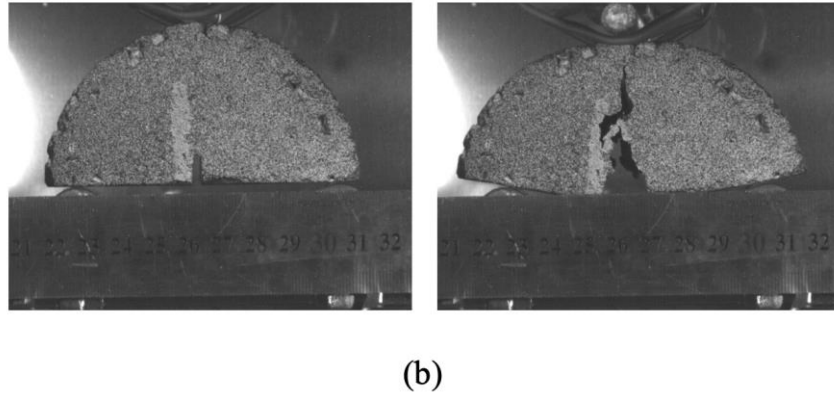
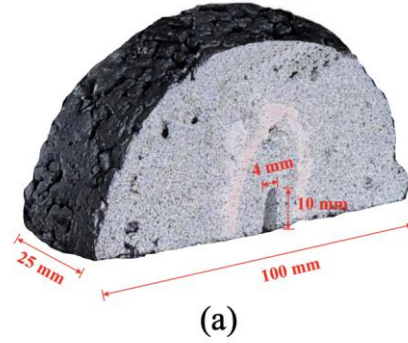


Fig. 2. (a) SCB specimen. (b) SCB specimen before testing (left) and failure of the specimen after testing (right).

Table 3 Testing conditions of different specimens in the displacement-controlled-mode SCB test.

Number	Ferrite content/%	Heating time Periods/s	Resting Time Periods/h
s1	0	0	0
s1(after recovery)	0	80	5
s2	5	0	0
s2(after recovery)	5	80	5

### 3.3.2 Stress-controlled-mode SCB test

The stress-controlled mode is suitable for performing fatigue tests. In the SCB fatigue tests, the stress amplitude was 0.2 kN and the stress ratio was 0.4. The frequency of the repeated compressive load was 10 Hz. This frequency consisted of a 0.1-s half-sine load and no rest period under different stress levels, which is approximately equivalent to a vehicle speed of 50 mph (approximately 80 km/h). To assess the benefits of ferrite powder in microwave heating and to quantify the effects of the resting and heating periods on the microwave healing process, the specimens were damaged until they failed. The specimens split into two pieces that looked identical to the pieces in the displacement-controlled-mode SCB test. These specimens were then heated and rested for a certain time. Finally, the specimens were damaged again by using the same fatigue loading. Table 4 presents the details of the experiments and test conditions. The first number indicates the ferrite content of the specimens. The number after the first underscore indicates the heating period of the specimen in seconds, and the number after the second underscore indicates the resting period in hours. For example, s0\_40\_5 represents a heating period of 40 s followed by a resting period of 5 h.

Table 4 Details of the different specimens used in the stress-controlled-mode SCB test.

Number	Ferrite content/%	Heating Time Periods/s	Resting Time Periods/h
s0_40_5	0	40	5
s0_40_15		40	15
s5_40_5	5	40	5
s5_40_15		40	15
s0_100_5	0	100	5
s0_100_15		100	15
s5_100_5	5	100	5
s5_100_15		100	15

### 3.4 Microwave heating

Microwave heating experiments were performed at a frequency of 2.45 GHz by using a conventional microwave heating oven with a capacity of 300 W. The size of the coil of the microwave heating machine was 150 mm × 500 mm. Specimens were heated in the microwave for a certain period and then rested at room temperature for several hours to cool down. The details of the microwave heating experiment are provided in section 3.1.

### 3.5 DIC implementation

The DIC setup displayed was used to obtain the full-field displacements and strains of the front surface of the specimen. Prior to image capturing, the surface of the specimen was conveniently treated to obtain a high-quality speckle pattern. The surface was first sprayed homogeneously in white. Next, randomly distributed black dots were sprayed in a similar manner.

To capture images continuously during the experiment, a charge-coupled device (CCD) camera was used to examine the two-dimensional plane deformation. A Nikon camera (SP AF17-50mm F/2.8) equipped with a 50-mm macrolens with manual control of the aperture, focus, and zoom was used for image capturing. The parameters of the camera are presented in Table 5. The in-plane displacement resolution was  $0.0000001 \times$  the field of view (FOV). According to the parameters of the camera as well as the distance between the specimen and the camera, the linear FOV was calculated to be 6.9 mm/m. From the linear FOV, the displacement accuracy was calculated to be 0.69  $\mu$ m. A subset size of 17 pixels and a step size of 1 were used for the DIC analysis. Two white light sources were mounted on both sides of the specimen to achieve superior illumination and image quality. The VIC-2D image processing software (Correlated Solutions Inc., USA) was used to analyze the displacement/strain field of the specimen. This software enables the measurement of the surface topography, displacement, and strain data for the full FOV in a two-dimensional space. The specimen dimensions were measured precisely before testing, and the software calibration tool was used to calibrate the scale of the reference image for each test according to the specimen measurements.

Table 5 Parameters of the high-speed CCD camera and DIC analysis.

Frame rate (Hz)	Sensor size of camera(")	Field of view (mm/m)	In-plane displacement resolution	Displacement accuracy ( $\mu$ m)	DIC analysis subset	DIC analysis step size ( pixel )
25	0.623	6.9	0.0000001 * FOV	0.69	17	1

## 4. Methodology: crack propagation analysis

The fracture behavior of the mixes was investigated using the cohesive zone model (CZM). The CZM is a useful for modeling crack development in asphaltic materials. It can be used to model a crack along bimaterial interfaces (such as aggregate–asphalt interfaces). This type of interface is considered a weak zone that is prone to failure. The CZM is introduced in the following text.

### 4.1 CZM

Barenblatt [44] proposed a cohesive model for investigating the fracture behavior of ductile and brittle materials. The cohesive crack concept was later successfully extended by Hillerborg et al. [45] to study nonlinear fracture processes. Furthermore, the CZM has been recently used to simulate the fracture process in different materials systems under various loading conditions.

Various mechanisms are active around the crack tip for the dissipation of inelastic energy, as displayed in Fig. 3 (a). CZM is a mathematical representation that describes a damaged diffuse area. This mathematical abstraction represents a single virtual crack that combines all the damage mechanisms in a diffuse area. The length of the FPZ ( $l_{FPZ}$ ) is defined as the length of a virtual crack that quantifies the extension of the damaged diffuse area.

According to the fictitious crack model proposed by Hillerborg [45], stresses act across a crack as it narrowly opens. The aforementioned model is applicable only to mode I (the opening mode).

The crack is assumed to propagate when the stress at the crack tip reaches the tensile strength  $f_t$ . When the crack opens, the stress is not assumed to fall to zero at once but to decrease with an increase in width  $w$  (namely the CTOD), as displayed in Fig. 3 (b). At the stress-free crack opening displacement  $w_c$ , the stress decreases to zero. The FPZ can be defined as a region with nonzero surface traction values within the separating surfaces. Thus, the processes occurring within the process zone dissipate energy.

As displayed in Fig. 3 (b), during crack propagation, a cohesive crack zone is formed at the front end of the virtual macrocrack. This zone corresponds to the FPZ. The relationship between the length of the FPZ and the opening displacement of the crack tip is depicted in Fig. 3 (c). The FPZ begins to form when the opening displacement satisfies the condition  $w > 0$ . When the opening displacement fulfills the condition  $w > w_c$  ( $w_c$  is the stress-free crack opening displacement), the ability to transfer stress is lost. The formula for calculating  $l_{FPZ}$  is as follows:

$$l_{FPZ} = l_{total} - l_{SFC} \quad (2)$$

where  $l_{SFC}$  is the length of the stress-free crack and  $l_{total}$  is the total length of the crack measured from the notch tip to wherever the opening displacement ( $w$ ) is greater than 0.



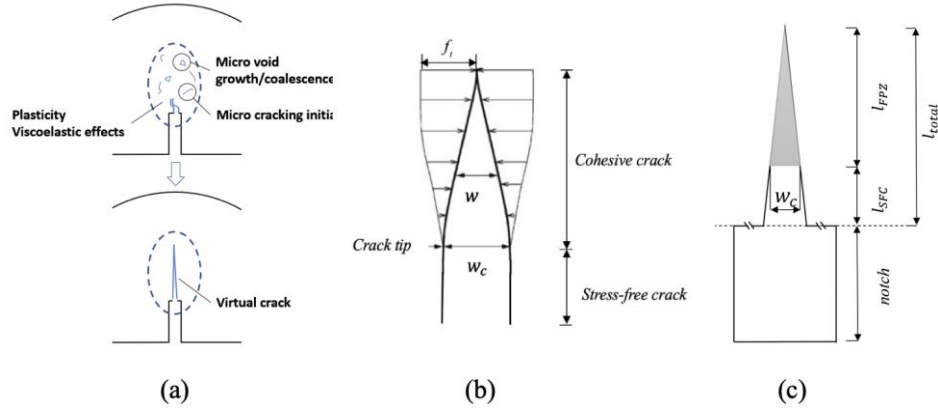


Fig. 3. (a) Virtual crack representing various mechanisms. (b) Illustration of the CZM. (c) Relationship between the FPZ length and the opening displacement of the stress-free crack.

According to the cohesive crack concept, the cohesive stress ( $\sigma$ ) within the FPZ can be expressed as the function of the crack opening displacement ( $w$ ), as illustrated in Fig. 3 (b) and (c). However, the length of the FPZ depends on the value of  $w_c$  in Fig. 3 (c). Therefore, determining the stress-free crack opening displacement  $w_c$  is important. Hillerborg et al. [45] and Petersson [46] have proposed the bilinear softening model, which better describes the strain softening behavior of concrete in the FPZ than the CZM does. In [46], the stress-free crack opening displacement  $w_c$  was  $3.6G_f/f_t$  ( $G_f$  is the cohesive fracture energy and  $f_t$  is the cohesive tensile stress at crack initiation). To understand the softening behavior of the rock-concrete interface, a bilinear  $\sigma - w$  relationship was determined by Dong et al. [47], who proposed the following relationship:  $w_c = 6G_f/f_t$ .

#### 4.2 Calculation of the opening displacement of the stress-free crack

The crack profile geometry was quantified by creating a computational grid composed of a set of evenly distributed parallel lines along the vertical y-axis and perpendicular to the crack surface, as displayed in Fig. 4 (a). Each line consisted of 200 pixels, where 1 pixel equaled 0.16 mm. As depicted in Fig. 4 (a), line  $L_0$  was just above the tip of the prenotch and the successive lines  $L_1, L_2, \dots, L_n$  were parallel to line  $L_0$ . The distance between any two adjacent lines was 5 mm. Fig. 4 (b) illustrates how the aforementioned lines were placed on a real specimen examined using the DIC method. The opening displacement  $u$  along the x-axis direction and corresponding to different loadings stages was derived using the DIC technique. The process is explained in the following text.

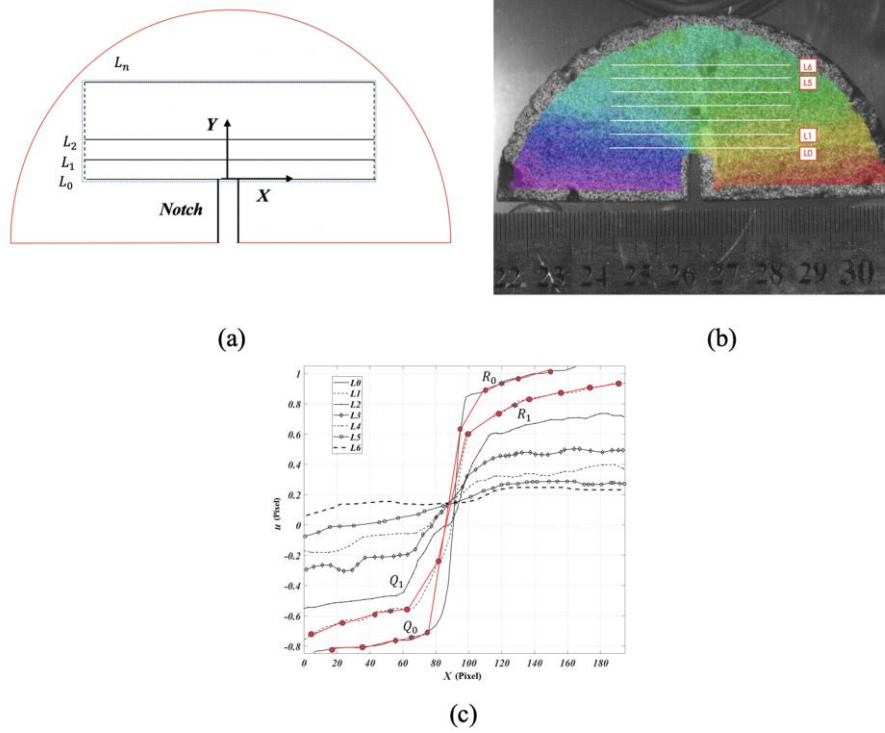


Fig. 4. (a) Schematic of the computational grid. (b) Computational grid applied on specimen s1. (c) Opening displacement calculated from the lines plotted in (b).

The displacement field at a certain time during the fracture process was used to illustrate the extraction process of the FPZ profile. Fig. 4 (c) displays the horizontal displacement along each line presented in Fig. 4 (b). Line  $L_0$  corresponds to the notch tip and exhibits the largest jump. The opening displacement on line  $L_0$  is obtained by directly calculating the jump of the displacement (which equals 1.6 pixels in this particular case). The jump of the displacement is determined by selecting two points at the boundaries, which are labeled as  $Q_0$  and  $R_0$  in Fig. 4 (c), to limit the jump. Points  $Q_0$  and  $R_0$  are selected as follows. Each line is divided into 3-mm intervals along its length (the interval unit must be converted from mm to pixels). The starting and ending points of the interval are connected through a line, and the slope of the line is calculated. The midpoint of an interval is selected if the slope of the previous interval is smaller than 0.01 and that of the following interval is larger than 0.01. After the difference is calculated between  $Q_0$  and  $R_0$  in vertical coordinates, the difference is converted from pixels to millimeters. The opening displacements on lines  $L_1, L_2, \dots, L_n$  are also calculated following the aforementioned procedure. The higher the line, the closer is the displacements to zero. Therefore, the crack tip can be assumed to be captured when one of the line profiles presents a horizontal line (zero jump). In this line profile, the material above the line is under a pure elastic regime. Only some small fluctuations are noted in the aforementioned profile mostly due to the heterogeneity of asphalt mixes. Caution is required when selecting points  $Q_0$  and  $R_0$ , and the selection of these points might become highly difficult when the jump is not obvious. In this case, additional lines must be added to increase the resolution of the segmentation process. A suitable line is then selected through visual inspection. The aforementioned process is repeated for all the images were captured through DIC.

## 5. Results and discussion

### 5.1 General description of the damage process

This section describes the main features of the mechanical response of a displacement-controlled loaded SCB specimen under a deformation speed of 5mm/min. The magnitude of the CTOD has been taken as the main indicator of the damage process (see Fig. 1). CTOD (i.e.,  $w$ ) has been derived from the measurements of the opening displacement recorded via the DIC technique explained before (i.e. this is the displacement jump obtained from line  $L_0$ ). Fig. 5 (a) shows a typical Force vs. CTOD curve. After a detailed observation analysis, it was deduced that the fracture process consisted of three stages. In the first stage, the material behaves mostly in a linear and elastic fashion and no visible cracks could be seen. In Fig. 5 (a), this stage corresponds to the first linear piece of the curve up to the point 1. The second stage corresponds to the piece of curve between the points 1 and 3 in Fig. 5 (a). Here, the microcracks are produced and collected in order to form a visible crack that propagates steadily. At this stage, the fracture process zone begins to form. The third stage corresponds to the curve path after point 3 in Fig. 5 (a). This last response indicated that the cracks rapidly expand producing a fast increase of the CTOD leading to a decrease of the reaction force. Fig. 5 (b) shows the crack profile and the obtained values of  $l_{FPZ}$  corresponding to the Points 1, 2 and 3 of the specimen s1. Fig. 5 (c) shows the contours of the horizontal displacement field of the specimen s1 at the points 1, 2, and 3 showed in Fig. 5 (a). This field shows that the development of the displacement around the notch is nearly anti-symmetric. The vertical cross-section at  $x = 0$  mm can be treated as the line of anti-symmetry, where the horizontal displacement is essentially zero. As the applied load increased, a clear discontinuity or jump of the displacement field was detected. Around the notch tip, the displacement changed from -0.12mm to 0.07mm at two sides of the anti-symmetry line ( $x = 0$  mm). The opening displacement can be interpreted as being part of a cohesive-based zone response. Since the applied load did not reach the peak, it is reasonable to assume that the displacement discontinuity can still transfer stress. In that sense, a detailed inspection of the specimen at points 2 and 3 did not reveal any visible crack or well-developed discontinuity. Therefore, despite the fact that a material connection is still visible between both sides around the displacement jump, this area can be considered as an equivalent virtual crack with both crack faces undergoing a cohesive force field. This experimental observation links well to the concept of

cohesive zone model (CZM) that will be treated in the next section.

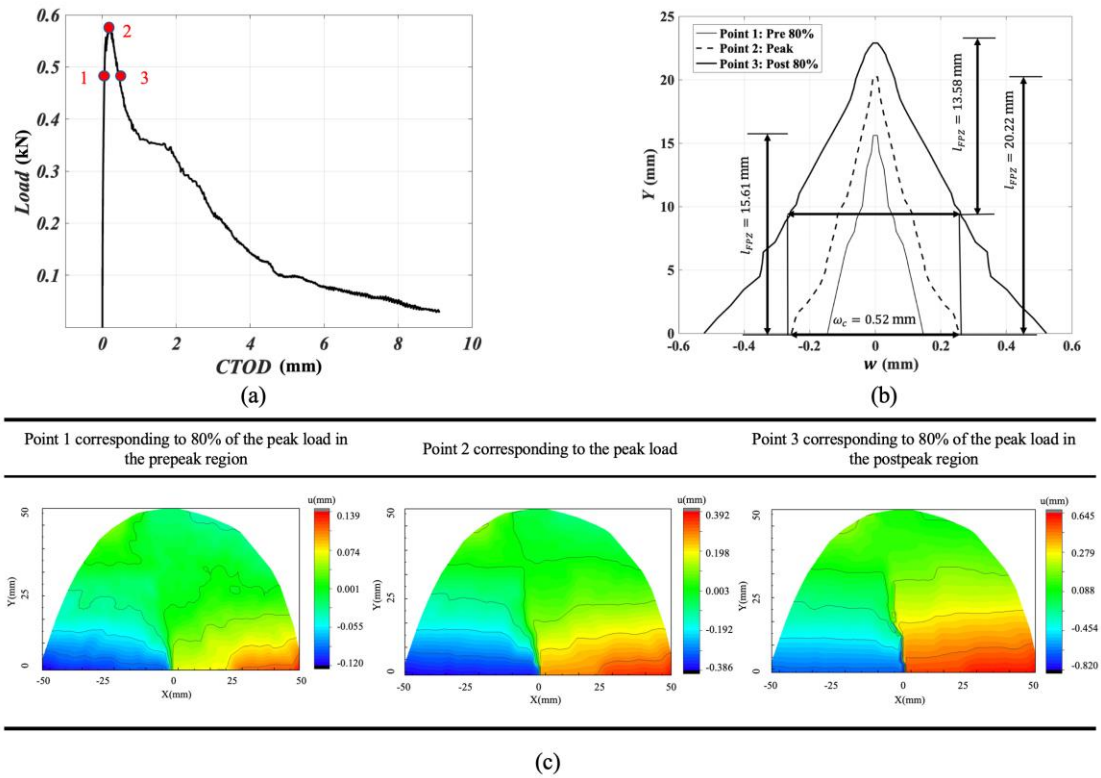


Fig. 5. (a) Damage process in the displacement-controlled mode. (b) Crack profile and  $l_{FPZ}$  of specimen s1. (c) Horizontal displacement contours in displacement-controlled-mode SCB (for interpreting the color chart in this figure, the reader is referred to the online version of this article).

With regard to the mechanical response of the SCB specimen under the stress-controlled mode, Fig. 6 (a) illustrates the curve of the CTOD versus the number of cycles. Prior to the 2000<sup>th</sup> loading cycle, the CTOD increased slowly. From the 2000<sup>th</sup> cycle until failure, the CTOD increased rapidly. Fig. 6 (b) displays a typical force versus CTOD curve. The specimen suddenly broke apart after several cycles. Fig. 6 (c) depicts the horizontal strain contours of specimen s0\_40\_5 at point 1 in Fig. 6 (a), which corresponds to 90% of the total loading period. Fig. 6 (c) also depicts the horizontal displacement pattern for point 2 in Fig. 6 (a), which corresponds to 95% of the total loading period. The morphologies of the aforementioned two patterns are very similar; however, the strain is higher at point 2 than at point 1. Fig. 6 (d) displays the crack profiles obtained at points 1 and 2 in Fig. 6 (a) for specimen s0\_40\_5. Points 1 and 2 correspond to 90% and 95% of the total number of cycles required, respectively, for the specimen to be completely damaged.

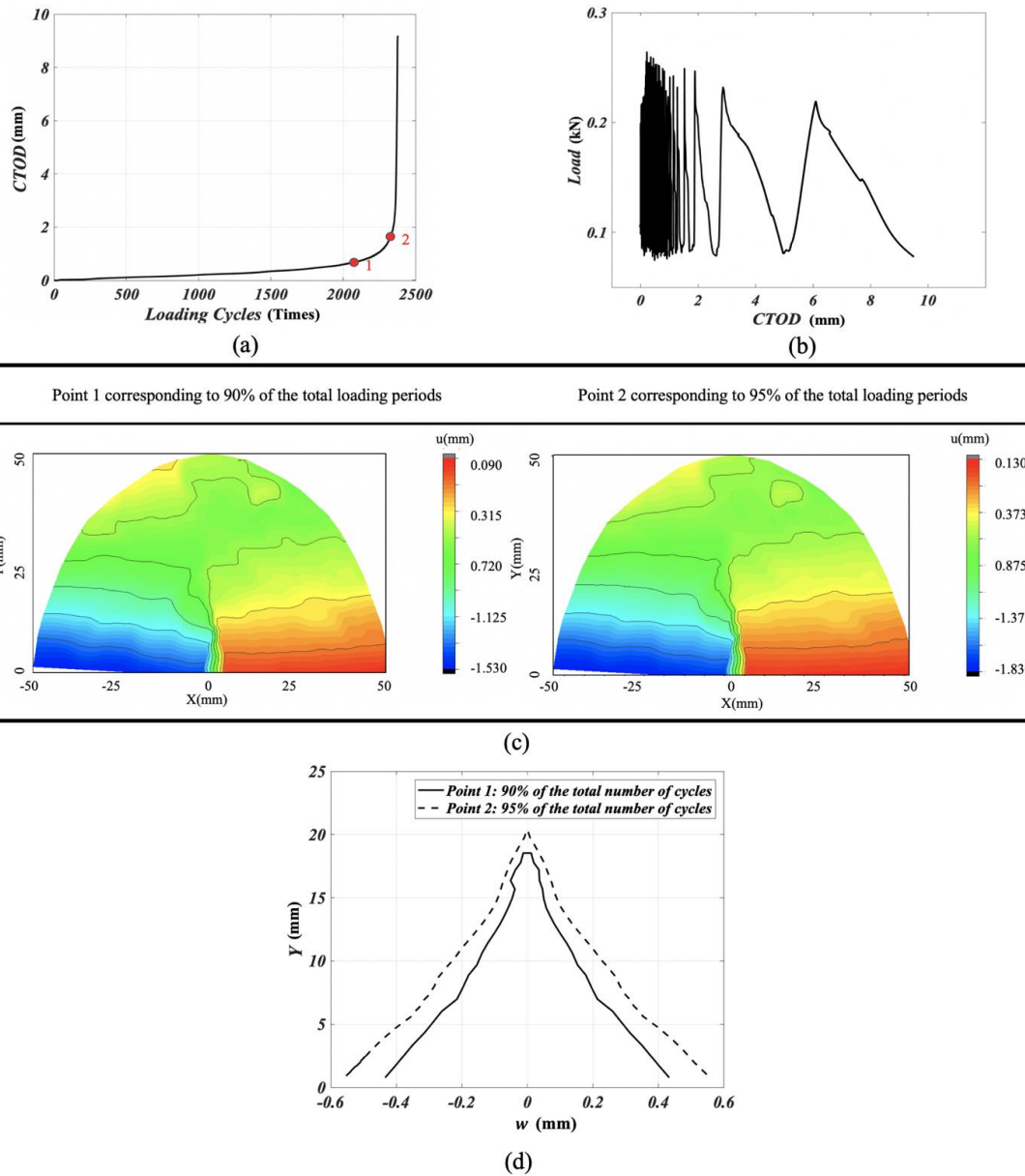


Fig. 6. (a) Damage process under stress-controlled-mode SCB. (b) Damage process in the stress-controlled process. (c) Horizontal displacement contours in the stress-controlled mode SCB (for interpretation of the color chart in the figure, the reader is referred to the online version of this article). (d) Crack profile of specimen s0\_40\_5.

## 5.2 Effect of the ferrite content on the FPZ

### 5.2.1 General response under the displacement-controlled mode

The specimen without ferrite (specimen s1) and the specimen containing ferrite (specimen s2) were subjected to the SCB test. After being damaged, the specimens were heated in a microwave oven for 80 s and then left to recover at room temperature for 5 h. After the resting period, the specimens were retested to determine if any strength regain occurred. Fig. 7 illustrates the relationship between the CTOD and the load for the specimens with and without ferrite.

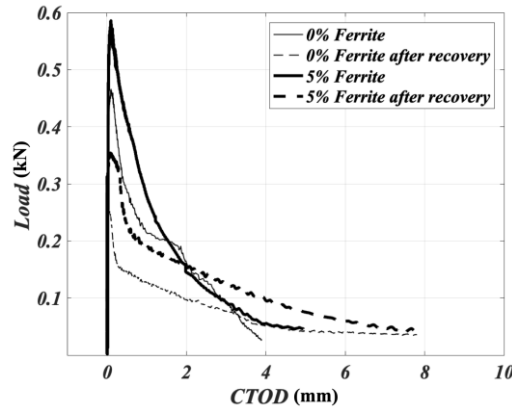


Fig. 7. Damage process for different specimen types.

Prior to the healing process, the specimen containing ferrite could withstand a larger load than the specimen without ferrite. Similarly, after the healing process, the specimen containing ferrite could better resist the effect of the load than the specimen without ferrite could. Moreover, the area under the curve was larger for the specimen containing ferrite than for the specimen without ferrite, which indicated that the addition of ferrite increased the toughness of the specimen material. Lin determined the opening displacement corresponding to the peak load as the critical opening displacement in the displacement-controlled-mode SCB test [48]. Table 6 presents the critical crack tip opening displacement of the displacement-controlled-mode SCB test. At the moment of the peak load, all the specimens had similar crack tip opening displacements.

Table 6 Critical opening displacement of the specimens at peak load.

Specimen's type	CTOD (mm)
0% Ferrite	0.51
0% Ferrite after recover	0.47
5% Ferrite	0.5
5% Ferrite after recover	0.45

The energy required to damage specimens is obtained according to the following formula:

$$W = \int_0^{\delta} P dw \quad (3)$$

where  $P$  is the load applied to the specimen,  $dw$  is the infinitesimal increment of the CTOD, and  $\delta$  is the maximum CTOD measured in the test.

The energy required to damage different types of specimens according to Eq. (3) is presented in Table 7. The energy required to damage the ferrite-filled specimens obtained before recovery and after healing is greater than that required to damage the specimen without ferrite. This result indicates that adding ferrite to asphalt mixes increases the toughness of the material. A plausible reason for this finding is that rounded ferrite particles enhance the wrapping process with asphalt. Therefore, the mastic generated by the ferrite and limestone filler has a good covering and wrapping

of aggregates in the mixture [49].

Table 7 Energy required for damaging different types of specimens.

Specimen	s1	s1 (after recovery)	s2	s2 (after recovery)
Energy (J)				
Corresponding to pre 80%	0.060	0.050	0.059	0.061
Corresponding to peak	0.184	0.092	0.211	0.122
Corresponding to post 80%	0.453	0.135	0.427	0.360
Whole process	0.685	0.576	0.856	0.919

Fig. 8 illustrates the final state of the specimen after recovery, where a virtual crack idealized by the concept of the CZM is well developed in the sample. Because the length of the FPZ was calculated in all cases, the energy release rate ( $G$ ) could be calculated for specimens s1 and s2 before and after recovery. The parameter  $G$  represents the energy per unit surface required to create a virtual crack of length  $l_{FPZ}$  (Fig. 8). This parameter (unit:  $J/m^2$ ) is calculated as follows:  $G = W/(l_{FPZ} \cdot depth)$ . Table 8 presents the results obtained for specimens s1 and s2.

The energy release rate of the ferrite-filled specimen (s2) before recovery was smaller than that of the specimen without ferrite (s1). However, the energy release rate of the ferrite-filled specimen after recovery was significantly larger than that of the specimen without ferrite. This result indicates that the addition of ferrite improves the microwave healing behavior. Damage mechanisms, such as microvoids and microcracks, were better cured after microwave heating. Thus, the microwave healing behavior and energy release rate of the ferrite-filled specimen were superior to those of the specimen without ferrite.

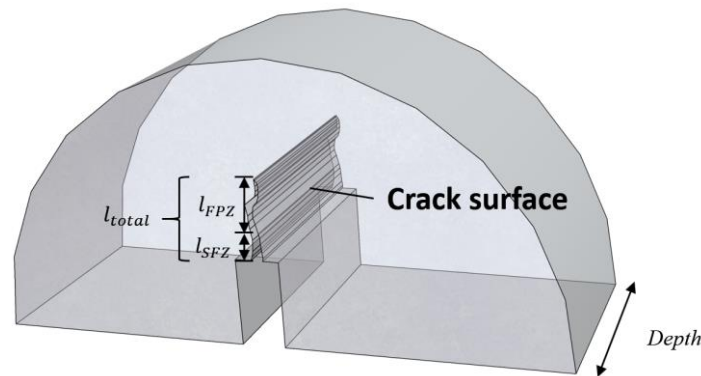


Fig. 8. Schematic of a CZM-based virtual crack in which the FPZ length is indicated.

Table 8 Energy release rates of different specimen types.

Specimen	s1	s1 (after recovery)	s2	s2 (after recovery)
$G (J/m^2)$				
Corresponding to pre 80%	163.1	172.4	152.5	166.5
Corresponding to peak	436.8	252.2	417.7	290.7
Corresponding to post 80%	1518.8	509.9	1258.7	1068.8



### 5.2.2 FPZ and dissipated energy in displacement-controlled-mode SCB

Fig. 9 displays the evolution of  $l_{FPZ}$  for specimens with and without ferrite under displacement-controlled-mode SCB. The  $x$ -axis indicates the proportion of the applied load with respect to the peak load. In Fig. 23, “pre” represents that the specimen is going through the fracture process before the peak load and “post” represents the process after the peak load. According to the aforementioned figure, all the studied cases exhibited the same global trend. As the load increased,  $l_{FPZ}$  increased continuously; however, when the load decreased,  $l_{FPZ}$  decreased rapidly. At the pre70–post80 stage, the specimen with ferrite had the highest  $l_{FPZ}$  value before healing; however, after healing,  $l_{FPZ}$  was similar to the values obtained for the specimens without ferrite before healing. The specimen without ferrite had the smallest  $l_{FPZ}$  value after healing. A longer FPZ length indicates a larger damaged region with more energy dissipation. A longer FPZ might also indicate a larger area of the active plastic zone [50]. Therefore, the addition of ferrite to asphalt mixes leads to a noticeable increase in energy dissipation, which leads to superior resistance for crack propagation.

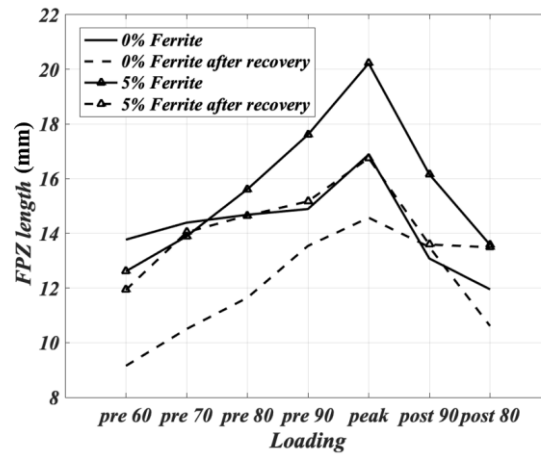


Fig. 9. FPZ lengths for different types of specimens.

The relationship between  $l_{FPZ}$  and the absorbed energy is plotted in Fig. 10. A well-developed FPZ has a large area in which the tensile and shear cohesive forces increase dissipation during fracture propagation. The FPZ length was typically longer for the specimens with ferrite powders than for those without ferrite. The energy required to damage the ferrite-filled specimens obtained before recovery and after healing was greater than that required for damaging the specimen without ferrite. This result suggests that the addition of ferrite powders to asphalt mixes increases the overall material toughness without negatively altering the microwave healing capability of the mixes.



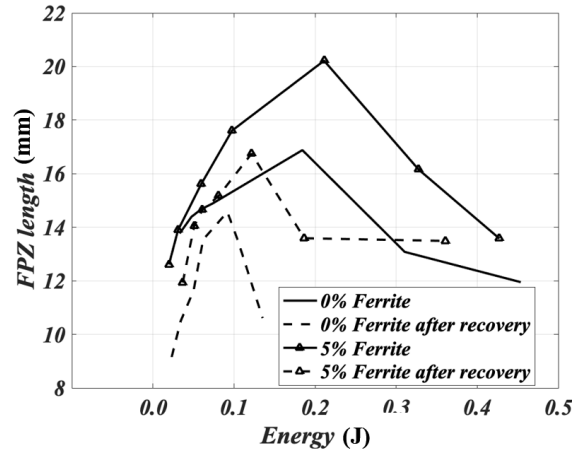


Fig. 10. Relationship between the FPZ length and energy under displacement-controlled-mode SCB.

### 5.2.3 Determination of stress-free crack opening displacement in the stress-controlled mode

The stress-free crack opening displacements under displacement-controlled-mode SCB are presented in Table 6. To understand the influence of  $w_c$  in the stress-controlled-mode SCB test, sensitivity analysis was performed by considering the following values of  $w_c$ : 0.4, 0.5, 0.6, and 0.7 mm. The method for determining the most suitable value for the asphalt mixes is discussed in the following section. In this regard, the variation of  $l_{FPZ}$  at different loading stages during the damage process was analyzed within the proposed range of  $w_c$ .

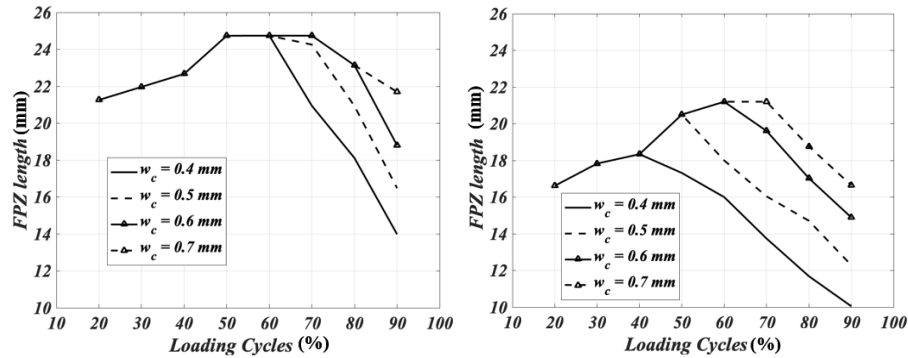


Fig. 11. FPZ length of specimen s5\_100\_5 with ferrite: (left) before recovery and (right) after recovery.

Fig. 11 illustrates the evolution in  $l_{FPZ}$  with the number of cycles for specimen s5\_100\_5 with ferrite before and after recovery. The horizontal coordinate indicates the percentage of the total number of cycles required for the specimen to be completely damaged. The left part of Fig. 11 indicates that the  $l_{FPZ}$  value of the specimen with ferrite increased with the loading cycles from a loading percentage of 20% to 50% and decreased with the loading cycle beyond a loading percentage of 60%. Beyond a loading percentage of 60%,  $l_{FPZ}$  changed as a function of  $w_c$ . The larger the value of  $w_c$ , the higher was the energy stored in the specimen and the longer was the FPZ. The smaller the value of  $w_c$ , the shorter was the value of  $l_{FPZ}$ . When the damage process reached 90%,  $l_{FPZ}$  was 13.98 mm for a  $w_c$  value of 0.4 mm and 21.69 mm for a  $w_c$  value of 0.7 mm. In the studied range of  $w_c$ , the length of FPZ differed by up to 7.71 mm. The right part of Fig. 11

presents the  $l_{FPZ}$  values for different values of  $w_c$  for the same specimen after recovery. Compared with the  $l_{FPZ}$  value before healing, the  $l_{FPZ}$  reduced in each stage after healing. When the load reached 50% of total loading cycles, the length of the FPZ was 20.5 mm after healing. The corresponding length before healing was 24.74 mm. The damage in the specimen that could not be healed resulted in a smaller FPZ after recovery than that obtained before recovery. Moreover, the moment at which  $l_{FPZ}$  reached a maximum value was gradually delayed when  $w_c$  increased.

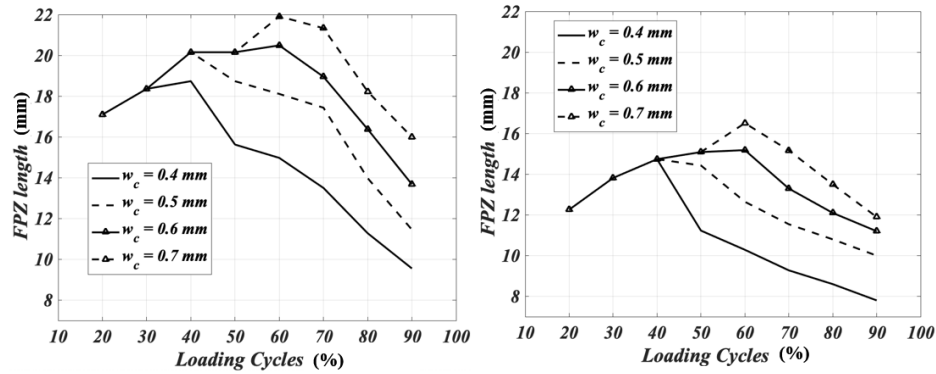


Fig. 12. FPZ length of the specimen without ferrite: (left) before healing and (right) after healing.

The left part of Fig. 12 presents the FPZ length of the specimen without ferrite (s0\_100\_5) before healing at different stages of the damage process. The effects of different  $w_c$  values on the FPZ were noticeable from the beginning of the damage process. In other words, compared with the previous case, the addition of ferrite increased the sensitivity of  $w_c$ . At all the damage stages, the value of  $l_{FPZ}$  was smaller for the specimen without ferrite than for the specimen with ferrite, which indicated that the crack tip opening displacement of samples with ferrite was generally larger than that of the samples without ferrite. Furthermore, the incorporation of ferrite led to decreased  $l_{FPZ}$  values. This result is in agreement with the fact that the ferrite-filled specimen had a higher toughness value than the specimen without ferrite even before the healing process. The right part of Fig. 12 presents the FPZ lengths of asphalt mixes without ferrite after healing following different damage processes. In general, the asphalt mixes without ferrite had the smallest FPZ length for all the  $w_c$  values, which indicated that these mixes had the worst capability to dissipate energy. During the mechanical test, samples of the aforementioned mixes were damaged locally prior to the full development of the FPZ.

According to the aforementioned analysis, the FPZ length calculated by setting  $w_c = 0.5$  mm represents an intermediate value. Moreover, the FPZ length for the aforementioned  $w_c$  value was similar on average to the FPZ length calculated using different  $w_c$  values. When the same value of  $w_c$  was used for the specimens with and without ferrite, the differences in the fracture properties of the two types of specimens could be compared easily. Therefore, 0.5 mm was assumed to be the most reasonable  $w_c$  value for the asphalt mixes studied in this research.

#### 5.2.4 FPZ and dissipated energy under stress-controlled mode SCB

Fig. 13 presents the FPZ length before and after the healing of specimens s0\_100\_5 and s5\_100\_5 when assuming  $w_c = 0.5$  mm. This result suggests that the specimen with ferrite had the highest FPZ length before healing during the entire fracture process, whereas the ferrite-free

specimen had the smallest FPZ length after the healing process.

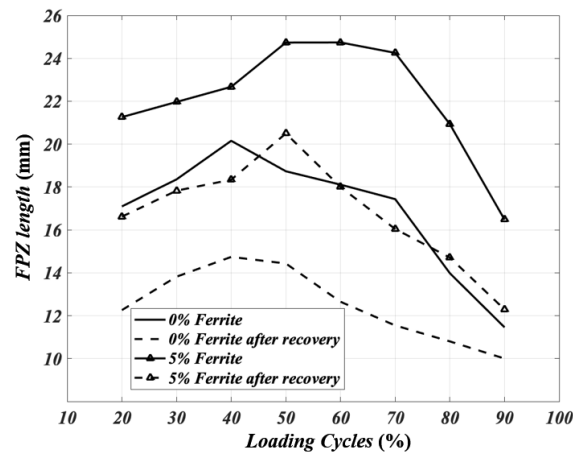


Fig. 13. Variation trend in the FPZ length under stress-controlled-mode SCB.

The energy required to break specimens s5\_100\_5 and s0\_100\_5 completely was obtained according to Eq. (3) (Table 9). Compared with the displacement-controlled-mode SCB test, the energy required for the fatigue test was significantly lower. This finding is consistent with the fact that the largest energy value was required to damage the control specimens with ferrite before heating, whereas the smallest energy value was required to damage the ferrite-free specimen after the healing process.

Table 9 Energy required for damaging different types of specimens.

Specimen	s5_100_5	s5_100_5 (after recovery)	s0_100_5	s0_100_5 (after recovery)
Energy (J)				
Corresponding to 60%	0.073	0.013	0.013	0.010
Corresponding to 80%	0.102	0.060	0.055	0.028
Whole process	0.160	0.123	0.107	0.087

The energy release rate under stress-controlled mode SCB was calculated as described in Section 5.2.1, and the results are presented in Table 10. The energy release rate of the ferrite-filled specimen before recovery was larger than that of the specimen without ferrite. The addition of ferrite increased the toughness of the asphalt mixes before recovery. As in the previous case, the recovery of  $G$  was larger for the ferrite-filled specimen than for the specimen without ferrite. Ferrite powder absorbed a large amount of heat and uniformly warmed the asphalt mortar around it, which led to enhanced recovery from the damage.

Table 10 Energy release rates of different specimen types.

Specimen	s5_100_5	s5_100_5 (after recovery)	s0_100_5	s0_100_5 (after recovery)
$G$ (J/m <sup>2</sup> )				
Corresponding to 60%	120.4	33.6	28.7	34.7
Corresponding to 80%	191.1	164.4	157.4	103.9

### 5.3 Influence of the heating and resting times on the FPZ length

The influence of different heating and different healing times on the energy release rate in the fatigue test was investigated for  $w_c = 0.5$  mm. The energy release rate corresponding to 80% of the fracture loading was selected to understand the process. The energy release rates for different situations in the fatigue test are summarized in Table 11.

Table 11 Energy release rate for different situations in the fatigue test.

Specimen	$G$ ( $J/m^2$ )	Corresponding to 80%
s0_40_5		140.8
s5_40_5 (after recovery)		67.6
s0_40_5		215.4
s5_40_5 (after recovery)		127.4
s0_40_15		164.5
s0_40_15 (after recovery)		90.5
s5_40_15		203.6
s5_40_15 (after recovery)		146.6
s0_100_5		157.4
s0_100_5 (after recovery)		103.9
s5_100_5		191.1
s5_100_5(after recovery)		164.4
s0_100_15		171.9
s0_100_15 (after recovery)		122.0
s5_100_15		202.0
s5_100_15(after recovery)		187.9

In general, the energy release rates after recovery increased with increases in the heating and resting times. To obtain an intuitive understanding of the difference between the energy release rates before recovery and after recovery, a new index called the recovery indicator (RI) was adopted. The RI was calculated as follows:

$$RI = \frac{\text{Energy release rate}_{\text{before recovery}}}{\text{Energy release rate}_{\text{after recovery}}} \quad (4)$$

The influence of different resting times on the specimens with and without ferrite was investigated.

Table 12 indicates that the RI increased as the resting time increased irrespective of whether the specimen contained ferrite. This result indicates that an increase in the resting time enhances the microwave healing behavior of specimens. Moreover, an increased resting time causes a greater enhancement in the microwave healing behavior of ferrite-filled specimens than in microwave healing behavior of specimens without ferrite.

Table 12 RI values for different resting times.

Number	Ferrite Content/%	Heating Time Periods/s	Resting Time Periods/h	RI
s0_40_5	0	40	5	0.48
s0_40_15		40	15	0.55
s5_40_5	5	40	5	0.59
s5_40_15		40	15	0.72

The influence of different heating times on specimens with and without ferrite were also investigated. As presented in Table 13, the RI increased with heating time, which indicates that an increased heating time enhances the microwave healing behavior of asphalt mixes. An increased heating time had a larger effect on the RI than an increased resting time did. This result suggests that the heating time is the most important factor affecting the microwave healing behavior of asphalt mixes.

Table 13 RI values for different heating times.

Number	Ferrite Content/%	Heating Time Periods /s	Resting Time Periods /h	RI
s0_40_5	0	40	5	0.48
s0_100_5		100	15	0.66
s5_40_5	5	40	5	0.59
s5_100_5		100	5	0.86

## 6. Conclusion

This study investigated the fracture process of asphalt mixes with and without ferrite powders. The mix proportion of the asphalt mixes were designed according to the OGFC-13 gradation. A total of 20 specimens were prepared from OGFC mixtures with and without ferrite powders for the displacement-controlled-mode and stress-controlled-mode SCB tests. By using the DIC technique, the damage process and FPZ were evaluated. The following conclusions were drawn from this study:

(1) In the displacement-controlled-mode SCB test, the specimen containing 5% of ferrite could withstand a higher load than the specimen without ferrite. The energy required to damage the ferrite-filled specimens before recovery and after healing was greater than that required to damage the specimen without ferrite. This result indicates that the addition of ferrite can increase the toughness and significantly improve the microwave healing behavior of asphalt mixes.

(2) The addition of ferrite increased the FPZ length, which indicated that the addition of ferrite to asphalt enhanced the energy dissipation process and led to an increased resistance to crack

propagation.

(3) In the stress-controlled-mode SCB test, the value of  $w_c$  was set 0.5 mm for the specimens with and without ferrite to compare their damage and microwave healing capabilities.

(4) The specimen with ferrite obtained before healing had the longest FPZ length during the entire fracture process, whereas the ferrite-free specimen obtained after the healing process had the smallest FPZ length. The energy release rate of the ferrite-filled specimen before recovery was larger than that of the specimen without ferrite.

(5) Increased resting and heating times improved the microwave healing capacity of asphalt mixes. The improvement in the microwave healing capacity was strengthened with the addition of ferrite powders.

(6) In conclusion, asphalt mixes with ferrite have a superior capacity to mixes without ferrite for resisting crack propagation under fatigue loading. The addition of ferrite increases the contact between aggregates and asphalt, which improves the cohesive tension effect between crack faces at relatively long lengths.

A microlevel study should be conducted in the future to confirm the reasons for the improvement in the crack resistance of asphalt mixes after the addition of ferrite to them.

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## CRediT authorship contribution statement

**Xingyi Zhu:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Writing - review & editing

**Yinhong Fan:** Data curation, Writing - original draft, Investigation, Software

**Ying Yu:** Data curation, Writing - original draft, Investigation, Software

**Francisco A. Gilabert:** Data curation, Writing - original draft, Investigation, Software